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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

1/16/63

MEMO FOR Mr. John McCone

Johns I enclose a copy of the material which I have sent McGeorge Bundy. You may wish to comment to him as to whether the description of the <sup>plan</sup> currently between you and Bob McNamara is an accurate representation. The only thing missing from the papers I am sending you is Tab A, of which I had only one copy. It refers to the earlier DOD proposal for surfacing the R-X.

Harold Brown

OSD DECLASSIFICATION/RELEASE INSTRUCTIONS ON FILE

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16 January 1963

THE ORIGINAL PLAN

The plan originally conceived is described in Tab A. Briefly stated Tab A makes the following statements:

a. A decision to surface is required to show to Congress, that we are not giving up manned strategic aircraft.

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b. [REDACTED]

c. It is impossible to keep OXCART secret forever.

d. The important item to be kept secret is the low value of the radar cross section.

It proposes to announce the existence of an X-21, a multipurpose aircraft with advanced technological concepts, initiated several years ago and now ready for test. It also announces the initiation of an RX program based on the X-21.

THE McNAMARA-McCONE PLAN

The currently agreed plan for handling the RX, based on the discussion between Secretary McNamara and Mr. McCone on the morning of 15 Jan 63, is that Sec. McNamara will read the attached statement to the full membership of the House and Senate Armed Services Committees and Defense Appropriations Subcommittees during his appearances

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on Military Posture, Authorization, and Appropriations. He will not transmit any copies to them.

He will tell them how much money is in the classified budget for the RX for FY 1964. The RXprogram itself would be carried out in the black. Sec. McNamara will brief the few cleared members of the above Committees on the background, actual status and planned operation date of the program.

\* The RX

The next issue I had to face was the development of the B-70, or the RS-70 as it was later called. The issue here was not the future of manned strategic aircraft in general. Rather, it was whether this particular aircraft, in either of its configurations, could add enough to our already programmed capabilities to make it worth its very high cost. We have studied this question very carefully, and we have reached the following conclusions. First, I believe all who participated in the studies are now convinced that, regardless of cost, a B-70 manned bomber would not be very useful in the late 1960's and early 1970's. We are also all agreed that we will probably need some sort of a manned reconnaissance capability in that time period, particularly to assess post-strike damage and to provide information on the enemy's status, generally. For this purpose, we should have a supersonic cruise aircraft which could cover

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the Sino-Soviet bloc from bases in the continental United States, since overseas bases would be too vulnerable to enemy attack in the time period we are discussing. What are the requirements for such an aircraft? \*

\* All of the Soviet Union and all except the southern-most portion of mainland China could be covered from almost anywhere in the continental United States by a supersonic cruise aircraft with a range of 4,000 nautical miles between refuelings and a total refueled range of 12,000 nautical miles. In fact, an aircraft with a total refueled range of 10,000 nautical miles, but with a range of 4,000 nautical miles between refuelings, could cover from northern U. S. bases (excluding Alaska) 90 percent of the projected Soviet nuclear threat against the United States. The range between refuelings is important since it represents the maximum distance the aircraft could fly over enemy territory. The required payload for such an aircraft to perform the pure reconnaissance mission appears to be about 5,000 pounds, including a crew of two and the required electronics and communications gear. \*

\* A close study of the technical problems involved in developing and producing such a system, viewed in light of the current state of the art, leads us to the following conclusions: \*

(1) No matter what the size of the aircraft, two refuelings would be necessary for full intercontinental operations at supersonic speed.

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Even an "R-70" would need one refueling (with forward tanker recovery, i. e., with the tanker aircraft landing at a forward recovery base after rendezvous for refueling) to achieve an 8,000 nautical mile range. But an 8,000 nautical mile range would allow it to reach only a small percentage of the target system and return.

(2) Range increases vary slowly in relation to increases in the weight, especially where refueling is necessary. It takes an increase from 140,000 to 555,000 pounds in gross weight, nearly fourfold, to increase the range "between refuelings" from 4,000 to 6,200 nautical miles, or just over 50 percent. And if two refuelings (with forward tanker recovery) are required, as would be the case if full intercontinental range is to be achieved, increases in the weight actually reduce range. This is so because the load of a KC-135 tanker represents a proportionately larger increase to the fuel supply of a small aircraft than to a large aircraft.

(3) Any aircraft with a gross weight in excess of 100,000 pounds would be able to carry the required payload.

(4) An aircraft with a total refueled range of 10,000 nautical miles (with forward tanker recovery) and 4,000 nautical miles between refuelings could cover the bulk of the significant targets (i. e., about 90 percent). This would be adequate for our purposes. Very little extra coverage would be gained by increasing the size and the range of the aircraft. Those few targets which could not be reached by such an aircraft

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operating from the continental United States across the northern approaches could be reached from other bases under U. S. control.

(5) An aircraft with a total refueled range of 10,000 nautical miles may have a gross weight as small as 140,000 pounds, compared with the 550,000 pounds of an "RS-70." \*

\* In the light of these findings, I asked the Air Force to do a study of the requirements for a post-strike reconnaissance aircraft and to prepare specific proposals for a new high performance aircraft optimized for this role. The Air Force has prepared a proposal for an aircraft, which we are now calling the "RX", and which I have approved. The RX will meet the payload and range requirements I discussed earlier. It will have a range between refuelings of some 4,000 nautical miles and a total range when twice refueled by KC-135's of about 10,000 nautical miles. The refueled range is about the same as that of the RS-70 with two refuelings. The aircraft will weight about 170,000 pounds, and it will carry two men. (A third could be added if required.) It will fly both higher and faster than the RS-70. \*

\* The approved plan calls for an initial planning objective of 6 test aircraft plus 25 operational aircraft at a total cost of about \$300 million for development and \$500 million for procurement. The first operational aircraft will be available in 1968. To achieve this, I have approved the use of \$50 million of fiscal year 1963 development funds and I am requesting

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\$100 million for development and \$50 million for procurement in the fiscal year 1964 budget."

"Having before us the option of developing a new high performance post-strike reconnaissance aircraft for far less cost than the RS-70, we had to face the problem of deciding whether the RS-70 should be developed."

"I believe that our studies have brought out very clearly the fact that in the environment of the decade, 1965-1975, when both we and the USSR will have deployed large ballistic missile forces, the best application of manned aircraft to the strategic mission will be post-strike reconnaissance. Moreover, I believe that the RX development will effectively bring to our strategic force mix that element of flexibility that is best contributed by manned strategic aircraft."